

Testimony

Committee on Child Protection

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Improving the system to better protect and serve Vermont children

I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony to the Committee on Child Protection

I have been a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) in Chittenden County for two years and served as a public health official in Vermont, Connecticut and New York with responsibilities that have included maternal and child health programs.

I have had the opportunity to work with 15 DCF social workers and supervisors in Vermont over the past two years. The majority are exemplary professionals who serve their clients and the community with distinction. There are some who do not. DCF staff might offer a similar assessment of GALs. In situations where a social worker or a GAL is not performing in a competent and professional manner, children can suffer.

I offer for your consideration a proposal that would establish a collaborative model with GALs providing feedback to the Agency of Human Services and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) on the performance of social workers. This proposal, if structured properly, can work if the feedback is a two way street with DCF staff providing performance appraisals on GALs and the focus is on improving our service to children and families.

Including attorneys and court staff in this model could further enhance the quality of our services.

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